

‘Day for Life’ message addresses human trafficking and modern slavery

- **Bishop Kevin Doran publishes video message on @CatholicBishops Twitter**

This Sunday, 7 October 2018, the Church in Ireland marks the *Day for Life*, a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage, and in every condition. *Day for Life* is celebrated each year by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland, and in England & Wales. The theme for this year’s *Day for Life* is focused on human trafficking and modern slavery.

Printed copies of the *Day for Life* pastoral message will be circulated at parish Masses throughout the country over this weekend. The text of the pastoral message is available in English (see below), and is also available in the Irish and Polish languages on www.catholicbishops.ie.

This year’s pastoral message includes a testimony from Daia* from Nigeria, who is a victim of human trafficking. The message also highlights the work of the Santa Marta Group, which works internationally to bring the Catholic Church and law enforcement agencies together to eradicate slavery.

Bishop Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin and the Bishops’ Conference *Day for Life* delegate, has recorded a video message which can be found on Twitter @catholicbishops.

A special web feature is available on www.catholicbishops.ie which includes:

- Text of the *Day for Life* pastoral message
- Prayers of Intercession on the theme of Human Trafficking.

***Day for Life* 2018 pastoral message**

Testimony

“My name is Daia*. I’m from a small town in Edo State, Nigeria. My family were very poor and from a young age I was always chasing a ‘better life’.

“At 18 I met and fell in love with Victor*, from Lagos. I was so impressed by his fine clothes and his confidence. Victor suggested going together to London – he said he had friends there and a job for me, cleaning in a hair salon. I was so excited. Victor traveled ahead and I was to follow him.

“After a long journey I arrived in Dublin. I had never heard of this place but thought it was just another stop-over on my way to London. Victor had arranged for someone to meet me. This man took me in his car. But we did not go to Victor, or to the hair salon, or to London. He took me to a brothel. I have been here ever since.”

* This is a true story. Names have been changed to protect identities.

Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Jesus tells us, “I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10 NJB). But many people do not have life to the full.

They have fallen victim to the scourge of human trafficking and modern slavery which are an assault on a person’s innate human dignity. People are not commodities to be traded ruthlessly for criminal profit.

Indeed, this is something that is happening in communities across our country, not just in our big cities. It’s not only happening in brothels and nail bars, but on farms, building sites and factories as well. Nor is this a problem confined to immigrant communities, it is affecting our own citizens too.

Trafficking is a growing problem and the UN estimates that over 40 million people worldwide are in slavery. In Ireland each year the victims of trafficking is approaching 100. Irish people are also trafficked in the UK where it is estimated that the total number of victims each year is over 13,000 from all countries.

Criminals exploit some of the most vulnerable and desperate people. We can act together to stop this. It is a crime hidden in plain sight. It is difficult to investigate, and the police need our help to identify and stop the traffickers and rescue and support the victims.

How can we help?

The Catholic community can make a real difference to help solve this problem – to help victims find freedom and live life to the full. There are many organisations working to put a stop to human trafficking and modern slavery. One of these, the Santa Marta Group, works internationally to bring the Catholic Church and law enforcement agencies together to eradicate slavery.

To read more visit www.santamartagroup.com. A Diocese or local Church community can effect real change for trafficked people.

Day for Life is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition.

We encourage you to deepen your understanding of Catholic Social Teaching on this important question by exploring the material we have for you on www.chooselife2018.ie/Day4Life/

We wish to thank Ruhama for its support in the preparation of this pastoral message on human trafficking. Ruhama is involved in advocacy and assists women affected by prostitution including victims of sex trafficking. See www.ruhama.ie

Notes to Editors

- The *Day for Life* has been celebrated in Ireland since 2001. The *Day for Life* was initiated by Pope John Paul II, to encourage the Catholic Church worldwide to promote and celebrate the sacredness of life. In his 1995 Encyclical Letter ‘*Evangelium Vitae*’ (*The Gospel of Life*), the late Pope proposed that “a day for life be celebrated each year in every country.” The primary purpose of this day should be “to foster in individual consciences, in families, in the Church, and in civil society, recognition of the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition” (EV #85). *Day for Life* is the Church’s special day dedicated to celebrating the dignity of life from conception to natural death. Since 2001, the following themes have been chosen to celebrate the annual *Day for Life*:

2001: Proclaiming the Gospel of Life

2002: End of Life Care – Ethical and Pastoral Issues

2003: The Wonder of Life, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II

2004: Life is for Living – A Reflection on suicide

2005: Cherishing the Evening of Life

2006: Celebrating the life and presence of people with disabilities in the Church and in society

2007: Blessed is the fruit of your womb – dedicated to protecting all human life

2008: Mental Health – mental ill-health can happen to anyone

2009: Focus on suicide, particularly the pastoral dimensions of this difficult and sensitive subject

2010: The meaning of Christian death and care for those who are dying

2011: A call to solidarity and hope in difficult times

2012: Choose Life!

2013: Care for Life: It’s Worth It

2014: Protect and Cherish Life #Livelife

2015: Cherishing Life: Accepting Death

2016: Everything is Connected

2017: Fostering a Culture that Protects Life and Respects Women

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